

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Masayuki "Mahjong" Yoshimura, 70, retired lumber salesman

*"Everybody. Nighttime, sometimes, we go out to the stone wall, talk story. All the Japanese, all the Hawaiian boys, we go down there, talk story, get together. Good. Waikiki was a very good place for the Cosmopolitan people to get around. Very harmonized. People really get together. We even had bon odori. Some of the Hawaiian boys used to go Japanese [-language] school with us. The family made 'em go Japanese school, some of them."*

Masayuki "Mahjong" Yoshimura, the third of six children, was born on January 1, 1916, at the A.M. Brown residence, now the site of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. His mother, Yatsu Morinaka Yoshimura, worked as a cook and maid for the Brown family; his father, Saisuke Yoshimura, worked at the Moana Hotel.

Later, the Yoshimuras moved to the Diamond Head end of Waikiki where the family operated the Waikiki Clothes Cleaners.

Yoshimura attended Waikiki Elementary, Washington Intermediate, and McKinley High School, graduating in 1935. After graduating, he worked at Ibaraki Store, Home Run Bakery, and Honolulu Planing Mill before serving in the 100th Battalion during World War II.

Retired from Mid-Pacific Lumber Company since 1980, Yoshimura now spends much of his time growing and judging orchids.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Masayuki "Mahjong" Yoshimura (MY)

April 23, 1986

Kapahulu, O'ahu

BY: Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Masayuki "Mahjong" Yoshimura on April 23, 1986 at his home in Kapahulu, O'ahu. The interviewer is Michi Kodama-Nishimoto.

Okay, Mr. Yoshimura, the first question I have is, what was your mother's full maiden name?

MY: Yatsu Morinaka Yoshimura.

MK: And I don't know how much you know about your mother's history, but what do you know about your mother's family history? Whatever you remember.

MY: Well, she came from Japan at a young age and got married to my father. She worked as a cook, you know, a maid at the Brown family in Waikiki. They were located where Royal Hawaiian Hotel is today. Let's see, now, that's all, I think, I know about her.

MK: How about your father's side?

MY: Well, my father, he came here and he used to work in a hotel. And after working for a hotel for a while, then he start driving a cab. After the cab driving, both of them, my mother and my father, started their own business. They started a cleaning business called "Waikiki Clothes Cleaning Shop" in Waikiki between 'Ohua and Kalakaua [Avenues].

MK: What was your father's name?

MY: Saisuke Yoshimura.

MK: Okay. Would you know what ken they came from in Japan?

MY: Yamaguchi-ken.

MK: When were you born?

MY: I was born January 1, 1916. New Year's.

MK: Oh, that was a happy time, then, for the family. How many brothers and sisters do you have?

MY: We had four boys and two girls. Of course, right now, we have only two boys left and two sisters. Both brothers are living in Kapahulu. My sisters all moved out. One in Mānoa and one in Pearlridge.

MK: What number are you in the family?

MY: I was number three in the family.

MK: You said earlier that your family house was in Waikīkī, yeah?

MY: That's right.

MK: Tell me again where that first house where you were born was located in Waikīkī?

MY: The first house where I was born in Waikīkī was where Royal Hawaiian [Hotel] is today. There used to be a Brown family. My mother used to work for the Brown family, and we lived there. That's where I was born, in that shack. In Waikīkī, in the Royal Hawaiian Hotel there was a cottage there.

MK: Then, how long did you folks stay over there?

MY: Chee, that, not too long because they went back to Japan, and they came back again.

MK: So, about how long did they stay in Japan when they went back?

MY: Oh, they didn't stay long. Not too long. They just visited the people out there again and they came back again.

MK: Then, when they came back from Japan, where did you folks live?

MY: We lived in Waikīkī right where 'Ōhūa, on 'Ōhūa Street, where all the Japanese people used to stay in Waikīkī. Most of the Japanese people stayed on 'Ōhūa.

MK: Whereabouts on 'Ōhūa was that?

MY: I think the number was 131 'Ōhūa Avenue, I think. It was (across from where) St. Augustine's Church is today, it's just about 200 yards from Kalākaua Avenue.

MK: You know, that house, what did it look like?

MY: Oh, the house was a duplex house. Most of the families live Waikīkī, all mostly had not one home. Most of them is duplex, you

know, like a camp. Two families live (in) one, divided. We had one, two, three houses in there, plus a Hawaiian home in the same area.

MK: Who were the families living over there?

MY: Oh, we had the Takashiges, the Murakamis, and Matsushiges, and the Hawaiian family was. . . . I forgot that Hawaiian family's name, now. I know [Hiram Kaakua] used to live there, see, but I don't know what their [i.e., other Hawaiian occupant's] name was already.

MK: Which of these families shared the other side of the duplex?

MY: Well, we and Takashige used to stay together, duplex. And Murakami and. . . . Let's see, I forgot now. Murakami and Matsushige, I think, was again.

MK: How about the kitchen facilities, or bathroom facilities, or laundry facilities, those days, over there?

MY: Everybody had their own kitchen. You know, kitchen and the bathroom. But only thing, the community was the furo. Furo was the only one was separate one. We had a small building with that old-style furo where you burn with the fire underneath the [furo]--you know, taku the firewood. And that's the only one that was separate from the homes. So everybody used one big furo.

MK: Who ran the o-furo, then?

MY: Well, everybody take chance, boil hot water. Maybe this week, you--everybody take chance. There's nobody assigned to the job. So, no problem, furo kind. Because all the firewood is all--you know, you don't buy. Because all, you get the kiawe tree or whatever you get, just wood, and just taku the firewood to make the furo.

MK: The people that lived around you, what kind of work did the men do?

MY: Most of them all work hotel. Later on, after they got enough of hotel work, they all run their own business. Like Murakamis, they ran the taxi cab. And Matsushige, they run the taxi cab. My father, they run the taxi cab. And Takashige, chee, I don't know what he ran, now. I don't think he ran taxi cab. I think he still was at a hotel, I think.

MK: Then, most of these families, about how many was there in each family?

MY: Oh, I think they had about two, three people there. Because that was young days, yet.

MK: You mentioned there was a Hawaiian family, yeah, living over there?



MY: Yeah, yeah.

MK: Since you folks are all Japanese and you have this one Hawaiian family, how was the relationship?

MY: Oh, the relationship good, you know. Because the old days, Hawaiians are very friendly and they really like the Japanese. Because they have luau, they invite you. And we have New Year's and parties, we invite them. There's no problem. The old Hawaiians are really enjoyable, too, to be with. Because the real old Hawaiian are really friendly people. In fact, some of the people I know, that old Japanese people, the issei, some of them, they could talk just as good as Hawaiian. The old people, they can talk with the Hawaiian people. They know their language because they've been with them so long, they can talk their language. Like us, we only know few words. Like them, they come home and they talk to them. They sit down, they talk. So, naturally, they know their language, eh? So, they can converse to each other in Hawaiian instead of English.

MK: Was that the way it was in Waikīkī, over there?

MY: Well, there wasn't too much Hawaiians where we are, see. But there were Hawaiians scattered here and there, you know.

MK: How long did you stay at that house on 'Ōhūa Lane?

MY: Oh, chee, about fifteen years, I think.

MK: So up to the time you were high school, about that?

MY: Well, high school, already, we move out. We stay in Waikīkī, but since my dad had the business, we move out to Kalākaua Avenue. We stay in Waikīkī all the time.

MK: So, actually, you had three homes in Waikīkī, then? The one by the Royal Hawaiian area . . .

MY: Yeah, that's where I born, yeah.

MK: The one on 'Ōhūa.

MY: Yeah.

MK: Then, later on, nearer to Kalākaua Avenue.

MY: Yeah. But like the one where I was born, well, you cannot say "home." But we stayed there for a while because we work [there]. But actually, the one in 'Ōhūa is where we all raised.

MK: Then, going back to the 'Ōhūa Lane house, try and describe for me, starting from your area, the kinds of people that lived around you.

MY: Well, from our locality, as you goes down toward the mountain, not the ocean, mountain, then we had the Kuramoto Camp. In the Kuramoto Camp you had Matsuzawas, then you had the Kawasaki, and you had the Tomomitsu, and you had Yanagawas. Then you go next to the camp, then you had the Sasaki Camp #1. The Sasaki is the one, that's the dentist [Tsutomu] Sasaki's family. Then that family, Sasaki, then you had the Monkawas, you had the Yoichisakos, then you had the Sakos, and you had Mineishi, and, yeah, that's all over there. Then you had next to that was another family but it wasn't Japanese. What's that family, now? Forgot now. A Haole family was there, but I forgot the name of that family. Then after that, you go up, then you have the Okada family. Okada, then you have the Nakamura, and you have the. . . . What else now? The other family was Nakamura--oh, the Masakis. Then, as you goes, then, across the Sasaki Camp, you had on the other side of the street, we had one Japanese family called the Nadamoto family. In those days, they were a produce company. The father used to run produce. That's the one had that Dr. Ichiro Nadamoto family.

Now, as you go back to the ocean side from our camp, then you have the Sasaki. When you say this [Soichi] Sasaki, it's the Outrigger Canoe Club Sasaki guy. He used to work for Outrigger Canoe Club. So, you have the Sasaki, the Watanabes, the Tada, and that's all. Then, next to that you had the Horie family. Then, you going toward the ocean yet, then you had the Matsumura family. Next to that, they had the Akana. And then next to that, you have the Okasako Store.

MK: This is all along 'Ōhua, then?

MY: Yeah, that's all on 'Ōhua.

MK: Okay. If you go down 'Ōhua, and you take a turn onto Kalākaua Avenue, what was on Kalākaua Avenue next to the Okasako Store?

MY: Oh, chee, but just lately come. The old one you had was the Terada Barbershop. Then you had the Banzai Cleaners. Then you had the Unique Ice Cream Parlor, the Hawaiian food. Then you had Cherry Blossom. . . . What you call that? Cherry. . . . What's that, the Japanese say, the store they sell Japanese goods? Oh, Cherry [Blossom] Dry Goods. And after that, you had the Kapi'olani Cleaners, that's [owned by Toshio] Yasumatsu. And after that, you had the Ibaraki Store.

MK: All of these businesses were . . .

MY: On Kalākaua Avenue.

MK: On Kalākaua Avenue. And then, if you started going up Paoakalani [Street] now, what was along Paoakalani . . .

MY: Well, you had the Lalani Hawaiian Village there. You know, Hawaiian Village, coming on the right side, Hawaiian Village.

That's where the Holt family [used to live]. Across the Holt family, this side, you had some camps. You had Tanimuras. Then, pass the Holt family, you had the Bishaws. Then, as you're going across, then you had the Asuka Camp. The Asuka Camp, you had all these--Akamatsu, Hiromotos. . . . Let's see, Hiromoto, Akamatsus. Chee, I recall one more family there. I forgot now. Then right back of that came the Waikiki Japanese-Language School. And across from that you had, this end, across Bishaw, you had the Manu family. Then, after the Manu family, you had the Akaka family. Then, across Akaka, you had [in one household] the DeRego and Pacheco family. Next to that, you have the Harakawa family. Then, after Harakawa, then you had the Purdy family. Then you have the Parker family. Across the Parker family you had the Yamamura. Yamamura, yeah. Then, after that, you had the corner there, then you have the--what's the family there now? Parker, then you have the Punohu family, eh? "Kaiser," [Joy] one. Punohu. And then, the next one, I don't know what the--I think you had the name of the person that . . .

MK: Kiakahi?

MY: Yeah, yeah. Kiakahi. Then, you go further up, then you had the Fujimoto family.

MK: Fujimoto family, yeah.

MY: This was way back inside--Fujimoto family inside--you had the Hoke family. H-O-K-E, Hoke family. Those days was all date trees and kiawe bush there. You had the Hoke family there. Then, coming back forward, then you get Lemon Road. That's right near the beach. Then, you had the Karratti family. The Sano. What then? Sano. And the Kawasakis all moved there [to Lemon Road]. Because 'Ōhua, they start building. They had to move out. All, they on Lemon Road.

MK: When they started building or reconstructing the 'Ōhua area, your family was not affected, though?

MY: No, we all moved out. After a while, we moved out. So, we moved to Kapahulu. Like I said, everybody start moving out because that's only lease land. You lease.

MK: Okay. And then, going back to the Lemon Road area, you have the Sasaki, and then. . . .

MY: Karratti.

MK: Karrattis.

MY: Kawasakis.

MK: Kawasakis.

MY: There's some more there, but I think I forgot now.

MK: How about Cartwright Road?

MY: Cartwright. Then that's when all the 'Ōhūa Sasaki Camp had to move. So they moved from there. Then they moved. So, see, the Matsuzawas, they all moved. They bought a place there, Matsuzawas. Then you have the DeFries. Then you have the Kawasaki again, but this Kawasaki is different Kawasaki. Yeah, this is the Tenrikyō Kawasaki. You know, the religious Kawasaki. Then, you go there, then you come to the Sasaki Camp with about the same people living there. And then, Nora Spencer family. Right after that, on the other side, then you have the Fujika family. Then you have the Nadamotos. Already they moved from Waikīkī--'Ōhūa--they moved there. Nadamoto. Then they moved there. Then you have the Kosakis, Esther Jackson. And on the corner, you had the Ornelles. They had some more family, I forgot now. Yeah, I think about all I can think of.

MK: Then, so like the Jacksons, they were on Hamohamo, right?

MY: Right.

MK: What other families were on Hamohamo?

MY: Ewaliko. Asuka. Already they moved from Paoakalani [Street] because the place was all taken over.

MK: Then, if you go up one more block to Kāneloa . . .

MY: Yeah, Kāneloa, that's where that family on the corner, you know, that . . .

MK: The Kiakahi family?

MY: Yeah, Kiakahi. Then you have the Lau family. Then you have the school there. Waikīkī School was there after that. On this side, you had the old cottages there. That people just stayed and, you know, it's not a residence there, only cottages, old cottages there. So, we don't know much of them.

MK: So when you were growing up, this area where you have 'Ōhūa [Avenue], Paoakalani [Street], that area was like your neighborhood?

MY: Yeah, that's our neighborhood. Plus, the other side, going toward hotel side--you know, going the Moana Hotel side. You have the Ham's family, and Paul, and all that. Tokioka, you know. Going toward Paoakalani [Street]. Today, Kuhio, they call 'em. Going toward the other end, you have the White family, the Tokiokas, the Ham family, and Paul. What's the fellow's name? (Amalu) family? The man, he died.



MK: Amalu?

MY: Sammy Amalu's family, yeah. Then go down some more, on the other side of the street, then you have the Peterson family. Peterson. You have the Love family. Then you have the Fullard-Leo, the one own that Palmyra Island. Well, that area used to be our area where you go get fruits, see. Because that area was all established from the old Captain Cook days, see. So, they had lot of mangoes, and lychees, our side had only common mango. The other side, they had all the good mangoes, like Pirie mango, apple mango, Chinese mango, lychees, spotted pear. All the good fruits is on the other side. So to get things when you small, you got to go early in the morning. Go over there and go hustle your. . . . Because they don't give you, see? 'Cause in the yard, eh? Because there was one family, one doctor family there. She don't even wants us kids to stay on the sidewalk to wait for the mango fall down. She said, "Boys, better keep going because not allowed to stay on the sidewalk." But we waiting for the mango fall down, eh? That was that, you know. So, when you young, you travel anyplace, you know.

And our days, you don't have any package to take home fruits. You don't put any fruit in the package, all in your shirt, you know. When you get yours, you all put in your shirt. This family that has a lychee tree, we go every year season time. We goes there and we help the lady. Ask the lady for lychee, and she give us all the lychee we like, 'cause she doesn't know what's that. After we get all the lychee in our shirt, we clean the whole front yard and the back yard for her. That was going years and years. Finally, she stop us because a Chinese came over there and she bought the whole fruit from the tree. So we don't have no lychee after that. Until then, we were enjoying the lychee every year. Clean the yard, you know.

Our days, we had lot of boys who go surfing. Today, Waikīkī, you don't see none of the boys now. Because most of the boys, now they have this new board. Our days, the board was real solid board, heavy board. When you go, you go across from our home to carry the board, you got to rest about five, six times before you can come home.

MK: And those days, where did you folks get your surfboards, though?

MY: We make 'em. We buy our board from Lewers & Cooke, and we make our own boards. And board is all about ten feet and over. Ten to twelve feet.

MK: Those days, when the Waikīkī boys went surfing, was there like an area that was like your territory on the beach?

MY: No, there's nothing, area, because not too much surfers. Most of the surfers are Japanese boys and some Hawaiian boys. No more other surfers. Only one outside surfer you seldom see was [Lemon] "Rusty" Holt. The rest is all, us, local, Oriental boys mostly.

MK: Going back to your neighborhood, like 'Ōhūa [Avenue], Paoakalani [Street], Cartwright [Road], Lemon [Road], Hamohamo [Road], Kāneloa [Road], that area, what did most of the people do for a living?

MY: Those times, most of them used to work hotel. Most of the Japanese people used to work hotel. Some are cook, some are bellhop or something, and waiters. Like the only one I know, like the Tada family, he work for the Steiner family, take care their yard and everything. So, most of them, Waikīkī people, most of them work for the hotel.

MK: Then, how about the women?

MY: Lot of women, they used to take home laundry. They do washing at home. Home laundry. Lot of them.

MK: How about your mother?

MY: My mother used to do home laundry, too. Yeah, home laundry. Then, later on, they opened the cleaning shop.

MK: You know, that neighborhood, so far, it seems like you have lot of Japanese, and then you have some gaijin, mostly part-Hawaiian kind gaijin. So, those days, all mixed up, when you folks get together?

MY: Oh, yeah. No trouble. Everybody is one--everything is lot of fun. I even organize baseball. I started a league. We use the Thomas Jefferson School, the playground. I had all the (working boys) one team, all the school students one team, and all the guys who stick around certain-certain part, one team. And I be the league manager. Then the ball game started at the Thomas Jefferson School. I go out and get all the sponsor for them. I get the T-shirt for them and all the prizes for them. I had the sponsor like Blue Bird Cafe, Blue Ocean Inn, Ibaraki Store. Had about five different sponsors, you know.

MK: So, about five teams, then?

MY: Yeah, five teams. And around the league, I get the T-shirt, everything, different colors. I stencil the shirt for them, I put all the name. Cost them nothing because I do everything for them. No more too much fighting, eh? More harmony among the group. That's why, you see, you got [Mervin] Richards them talk nice about us because we all friendly boys. Everybody. Nighttime, sometimes, we go out to the stone wall, talk story. All the Japanese, all the Hawaiian boys, we go down there, talk story, get together. Good. Waikīkī was a very good place for the Cosmopolitan people to get around. Very harmonized. People really get together. We even had bon odori. Some of the Hawaiian boys used to go Japanese[-language] school with us. The family make 'em go Japanese school, some of them.

MK: Like this bon odori, where would it be held?

- MY: Oh, was held on 'Ōhūa [Avenue]. Between 'Ōhūa and Paoakalani [Street], there used to be a big area there with a banyan tree. Oh, it's a huge banyan tree. Underneath the banyan tree, big place.
- MK: Who used to sponsor the bon odori?
- MY: The Japanese people of Waikīkī. Yeah, they have that. They sponsor that.
- MK: Now days, like the Fukushima Bon Odori group comes and they do the taiko and everything. Those days, who did all that?
- MY: Oh, Waikīkī had. We had all good. Like we had the Kaji man, you know, Kaji from hotel. And Matsumoto man, Murakami, and there was another man. They're all bon odori singers. They're good singers. And we learned how to hit the taiko. We hit taiko, too. We learn how to hit that. So, we had the older people lead the taiko dance. Like us, we learn and we can hit the taiko, too. So, you know, give the elder rest. So, everybody enjoy.
- MK: Like now days, when you go bon odori, there's barbecue stick, shave ice. How about those days?
- MY: No, no, no. You don't see no barbecue stick. Just good harmonizing, all the guys dancing, eh? And you don't have no fight or nothing. Nice. And all with kimonos, da kine.
- MK: But how about the gaijin, though, they would come?
- MY: They dance. Oh, they all dance, get inside [i.e., join in on the dancing]. Because those days, not like today, come fancy kind. You know like the Fukushima. Those days, only get the Yamaguchi-ken one. That's all, see. No more the other kind fancy kind. So everybody can go in, get inside. You go one time around, you learn that already. You know what to do already. There's no such thing as you got to know the technique.
- In fact, Waikīkī Association, one time, we even made a stage. We had da kine butai. We had a play. You know, da kine shibai, we had. All the boys go act. That was good old days. One time, we had shibai. All the young guys dress. We shibai.
- MK: Who would organize something like that?
- MY: Well, the association. Like the Japanese like. . . . Till today, [there is a community organization], of course, now they call 'em, "Aloha Kai--Waikīkī Aloha Kai." Yeah, they still have, yet. Once a year they get picnic. My brother is in. But I'm not in because I got no more time.
- MK: Now days, Aloha Kai makes picnics. How about way back when, you folks had picnics in the old days?

MY: They had. Yeah, they had. They had get-together, too.

MK: Where would the picnics be held and what would you folks do at the picnics?

MY: They had races, get-together, running prize. Not much, only it's a get-together. In fact, our days, old days, was a treat because they go far place. They don't go down Ala Moana Park. They go far place. But now, I don't know if that. And I remember, they used to go--oh, one time, we went with that O'ahu Railway. But now, I don't know. That was way back, so we forgot already where.

MK: Going back to that baseball league that you talked about, Mr. Mervin Richards told me about a Nami-no-Kai . . .

MY: Yeah, I started a surfing club. You know, Waikīkī, I started a surfing club, and I named it Nami-no-Kai because almost all Japanese on our club, see. But since everybody like to join the club, they get free T-shirt because I make for them. So we had the T-shirt and we call ourselves, "Nami-no-Kai."

MK: So Nami-no-kai was a surfing club, not the baseball league?

MY: No. Nami-no-Kai is the surfing. Nami means "wave," see. Kai means "club." Wave club, eh? Nami-no-Kai. So the baseball league was just Waikīkī Community Softball League. Ours, we call Waikīkī Community Softball League. We have all the different category of players belong to the certain gang. I divide 'em up equal so that everybody can play. I'm the manager of the team [league], so they got to listen to me what I tell them guys. No trouble at all.

MK: How old were the guys in that league?

MY: Oh, was old. Some, you can imagine. The small one was all the young boys, yeah?

I used to even stop the peddlers. You know, the peddlers? Old days, they have the peddlers come sell food to the camp. So I used to tell 'em, "O-san, you can donate one gallon shōyu for door prize?"

"Yeah, okay."

Anything to get something for the door prize, you know.

MK: Those days, what kind of peddlers used to come, your area?

MY: Japanese peddler. But, you know, regular da kine food peddler, Japanese peddler. And then, there was only one Chinese peddler. The manapua man carry with a stick, eh? He carry. Balance one in the front and one in the back. Yeah, he was the only one, Chinese, in Waikīkī, he was. Then, they told you about the Chinese house back of the Sasaki? There was a Chinese, old Chinese,



religious-looking house. They used to smoke opium. But nobody bother them because they old people.

MK: So, the people that smoked opium, they lived over there?

MY: Yeah, they lived there. They lived there. You can tell. They get long pipe and they sitting down, high, eh? But like us, we don't bother. No bother. That's their business.

Then, Asuka man [i.e., Tokumatsu Asuka], his hobby was fighting chicken. Asuka man. Yeah, fight chicken, so he used to breed fighting chicken, and he used to make his own. Fight with the chicken. The winner get one (suck) raw eggs.

MK: That's all? The winner would just get that?

MY: Yeah, because they don't gamble, those days. It's not like today.

MK: So, the Asuka man used to bring in chickens to fight?

MY: No, he used to raise, I think. Not like today, they bring in from North, South Carolina, eh? Those days, they raise their chicken. I guess they learn the trade from Japan, I don't know, but.

MK: Oh, so there were chicken fights in Waikīkī then?

MY: Yeah. (But, not with outsiders' chickens. Just Asuka man's chickens.)

MK: That, I never heard before.

MY: They had, but people don't know. Because like us, we know because we go there, look. The other kind people, the gaijin like that, they don't go look. They don't know what's going [on] in the camp. Like us, anything is something different, we go there and look. Fighting chicken.

MK: Oh, that's interesting. Now, let's see. Going back to your family, you were saying that your mother, when she was younger, used to work for the Brown family as a maid, and then later on, she took in laundry. And then, your father, in the beginning, he worked for Moana [Hotel]?

MY: Yeah, Moana Hotel.

MK: What did he do at Moana?

MY: Waiter. And then, after that, he start running taxi cab. After the cab, he and mother started the Waikīkī Clothes Cleaning Shop until they retired.

MK: Going back to that taxi stand, where was his taxi stand?

MY: On 'Ōhūa. Right in front of our building, in front, they had one big, long garage.

MK: And it was just his stand or . . .

MY: No. We had one, two, three people inside there, taxi.

MK: Who were the other two?

MY: Matsushige and Murakami.

MK: Did the taxi stand have a name?

MY: Those days, I don't think they had names. They just call 'em, telephone number, that's all. They just call. Because they know already.

MK: Those days, who used to be his customers?

MY: The people around there. When they want to go to town or something.

MK: So, his business was not like Mervin Richards' father's business. He didn't take around tourists . . .

MY: Tourists? No, not, no. Oh, sometimes, you have tourists come, but it's not like going around the island or something like that, and come back, and they have a luau. Not like that.

MK: You said that after the taxi stand, he opened up the cleaner with your mother.

MY: Yeah.

MK: How come they decided to open up a cleaner?

MY: Well, they figure, they can make some money. And they did, you know. They did make money. But those days, the business was real cheap. One pants was twenty-five cents. Dry-clean, twenty-five cents. Coat. So, maybe pants and coat, maybe only cost fifty cents or forty-five cents, I don't know. Was cheap. But still yet, that was good. So, we're lucky. That's why we were lucky. We can go to school.

MK: Who were your customers?

MY: Oh, the hotels. Waikīkī had lot of people in Waikīkī, gaijin, that all had good jobs. See, in old days, all the Haole people had all good jobs. Like they work the immigration office. [One person's] mother was a schoolteacher and the father was a customs inspector. There was another one, same thing. Of course, we had a good public relations man, Sam Kahanamoku. He used to bring all the hotel customers to (our cleaners). All bring. Johnny Weismuller,

everybody that he knows that need cleaning. He call Mama, he give them the--to bring all to my house.

MK: How come Sam Kahanamoku did that for your business?

MY: Because my father was a taxi. Sometimes, he goes out before. They know my father, see? And he work hotel. They know us so well. So, we were lucky. We used to get lot of [customers]. . . . And had lot of business that we deliver too, you know. Waikiki, deliver all to the families.

MK: I know, like Mr. Yasumatsu's business, they had customers that were outside of Waikiki. How about you folks?

MY: We had some. Kahala, like that, you know. Yeah. Outside, yeah, we had some. But we had lot of it from hotel, too.

MK: They were the tourists, then, you mean?

MY: No, no. Hotel?

MK: Uh huh [Yes].

MY: Yeah, hotel is mostly tourist. They need their clothes right away.

MK: And then, those days, who did all the work at the cleaner?

MY: My father and mother.

MK: Just two of them, then?

MY: And my brother sometimes help, yeah.

MK: How about you?

MY: Me? Well, I'm going school, so I cannot work too hard, eh? So I help 'em maybe deliver. That's why, we're lucky because they had that business. So we can go school with good clothes. That's why, guys in school used to tell me, "How come you come school with nice clothes every time?"

"Well, cleaning business, you can wear nice clothes."

MK: Your mom and your dad, they were working all through. How did they raise the children? How did they take care of you folks, too, and run their business and . . .

MY: Well, like when they come to the age of they were kind of big already, they don't watch you, you know. The old-time days, they don't watch you what you do. They leave it alone because no more place to get run over or get into trouble, mischief. Only time, maybe, you get trouble is maybe when you go get dates and the stone fall down from the tree or mango [while knocking down fruits]. He

throw rock at [the fruits] . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: So, those days were kind of safe, so . . .

MY: Oh, yeah. Safe. Because not like today, make sure you got to watch your kids and this and that. Those days, they leave the kids alone. They don't have to teach 'em to go study, they all study. Today, you don't tell 'em study, they no study. Our days, we study. Come home from school, we study, do our lesson, and then go play.

MK: You were telling me that your mother was always a kind of open-hearted lady.

MY: Yeah, she is.

MK: How did she treat your friends?

MY: Oh, just like an open house. Everybody is her friend. She's so liked by people, my mother.

MK: Tell me again about how some of your friends used to like to come to your house and sleep over because of your mother.

MY: 'Cause my mother doesn't bar nobody from coming.

MK: And you were telling me that she used to do Haole-type cooking?

MY: Yeah. She can cook any kind, cooking. She can cook Hawaiian food, Chinese food, Japanese food. So when I got married to my wife, she had the hardest time to adjust to eat. She cannot eat lamb, broiled lamb. She cannot. She cannot eat that squid lū'au, eh? She cannot. She see that, she cannot eat. She cannot eat tripe stew. Because those cooking are different. Like where she was raised, all had little meat and lot of vegetables and shoyu, cook. Everything, little meat, plenty vegetables, tofu.

Like us, we have steak, everything, eh? My mother always tell me, "Of all the boys, you're the smartest guy how to eat meat." I don't eat well-done. Mine's is all medium rare. All the rest of the boys all got to be well done. Mine's is medium rare, so when she cut my meat, I have my plate back of the manaita. Soon as she cut the meat, she tilt, the blood all go into my rice, eh?

So, when I used to work down Honolulu Planing Mill, and I catch fish [off] Waikīkī, I catch pāpios, she used to make sushi with that. You know, soak 'em in namasu, vinegar, and she (soak) the



meat and bone (the fish), and she made da kine fish, eh? I bring 'em to work, that's my lunch. But I don't care for that. But my friends, oh, they die for that. So when I go to work, they ask me, "What kind lunch you get today?"

I say, "Oh, I get fish."

Oh, boy. Quick, they give me all their lunch. "You can have my lunch."

Because my friends don't have father and mother, both of them. But they have good job, see. That's how I got my job, from them. Our days, a job is hard to find. Very, very scarce. You cannot get job. Even if you get high school [diploma], you lucky you find one office job. Very scarce. So, they put me into the office. So, I started as a . . . . What do you call that kind? Messenger, office boy? Go deliver mail. Then, after that, I came clerk. That's when I started knowing these people.

MK: Before we get into your work life, staying back on the topic of Waikīkī, you mentioned that your neighborhood had like bon dances, everybody was friendly. What did you folks have besides bon dances for organized activities in the old days?

MY: Chee, let's see, now. Well, they had not much, no? Only shibai. Once in a while they have a shibai. And then, the bon dance. No, not much. Not much. We didn't have much things. Like the children, they had lot of [beach activities]. . . . Because you can go surfing, you can go fishing. So, Waikīkī children was lucky because at least you can go fishing and surfing, eh? So, all the outside people used to come my place, my home, every time, to borrow our bathroom to change clothes to go swimming or surfing. That's the only place, they used to come. So, I used to know people from all over Honolulu. From Pālama to Mānoa, they always come my place to change clothes to go surfing or swimming.

MK: That's unusual, yeah, if you can live in Waikīkī, so near to the beach?

MY: Yeah. Yeah, because you can go fishing, you know. So, I used to go get ogo, you know. Get ogo, plenty ogo, come back, and give 'em out to the people in Waikīkī who likes, eh? Because my father's place, the cleaning shop, about seven o'clock [in the morning], people come. All the old folks, get nothing to do, they come, come talk story. So, they come to talk story. My dad, what we have, maybe I have ogo today, he tell 'em, "Oh, no go home because we get plenty ogo." Or if I catch menpachi, plenty menpachi, then she [MY's mother] tell me go in the back. On the washboard, get (in) the laundry place. Put all the fish on top there so they can take home the fish. That's how my mother was, very, very generous. She was generous. Very generous. That's why, you see, everybody, they talk about my mother. They say, "Ho, your mother was good." Never argue.

I had a brother below me, rascal one. He died already from appendix. He was the rascal of the family. He's always with the bigger [boys]. It was that group, see. So, he was going 'Iolani School [i.e., a private school]. I go McKinley [High School, a public school]. He go better school than me. And my dad used to tell me, "How come? 'Kewpie's"---they call "Kewpie," see---"How come 'Kewpie's car outside Waikīkī by the stone wall? How come his car outside there?"

"I don't know." So, we go look. "Oh, I think they wen take 'em go school and they borrow the car back." You know, the guys. They take him go school, and they borrow the car back, and bring the car Waikīkī. So when school over, they go back and pick him up. Then, he charges gas to my father. Diamond Service Station on Kapahulu [Avenue]. Used to get Diamond--charge 'em. The man, he let him charge any amount because he know my father and my brother. So, he says, "Oh, yeah, Yoshimura. Good. No scared. Charge, up to you." And the manapua man, too. My kid brother go take plenty manapua, he go give everybody. And he think the manapua man don't know. After he pau go home, he put all the list how much my brother take. He come to the cleaning shop. "Mama-san, 'Kewpie,' today, eighty cents." Those days, eighty cents is big money, you know. Plenty manapua. Manapua is five cents, one, those days. Chow fun is five cents in a small package. "'Kewpie' take eighty cents today." Take all. He go give all them guys.

MK: He was a rascal.

MY: Oh, yeah. Everybody knows him, boy, I tell you.

MK: So, the kids, the boys, had a lot of things to do, then, Waikīkī.

MY: Oh, yeah. Waikīkī people, yeah, boys get lot to do. Yeah, got lot to do. When it's mango season, you get plenty mangoes. You go get mangoes. Date season, you go down to the hotel side, get plenty dates. Get dates. Go fishing, spear fishing, surfing.

MK: And then, the ogo that you mentioned, you got it in Waikīkī?

MY: In Waikīkī, in front Halekūlani Hotel. Plenty over there used to get. Plenty ogo. In front our place, get, but not like Halekūlani. Like in front of Waikīkī, you got to look for 'em. Halekūlani, you just dive. You can see all ogo already. You get one bag in about fifteen minutes.

MK: Oh, not like that now, though. (Laughs)

MY: I used to go get [ogo], yet, you know, [in] Waikīkī, about twelve years ago. I used to go get, Waikīkī, though. But no more now because, see, the sewer system got to come out to the river. . . . You know, Waikīkī, all the water come out. No more fresh water inside the ocean, no more ogo, you know. You got to get fresh water come into the salt water, then you get ogo. If no more fresh

water, no more ogo. So, I used to go get and I used to give out. Once in a while, I go down Makino place, way down there, I go get. 'Āinakoa place, I used to go. But hard work. To get only this much [little more than a handful], you take sometimes two hours, eh? That's too much work.

MK: Yeah. Then, in the old days, what did the women do? Like your sisters or your mother and the neighborhood ladies?

MY: Chee, I don't know what the women do. I think the women, they don't do nothing, eh? Only talk story, I think. Oh, yeah, some of the women, they used to go learn koto, you know, some of them. You know, they go learn koto, [and] Japanese dancing. Yeah, some of them, I remember, now. Yeah, because there was one koto teacher and there's a odori sensei. Yeah, they used to learn da kine Japanese dancing, like that, some of the girls.

MK: The instructors would come into Waikīkī?

MY: Well, some of them used to live Waikīkī, see, no? Yeah. And they used to come too. If they come, they had maybe the Japanese [-language] school, you know. Yeah, they have a place.

MK: Somebody told me in Waikīkī there used to be teahouses, too, huh?

MY: Ah, but most of the teahouses was on the other side, no? John 'Ena Road side. On our side, I don't think you had teahouses.

MK: Oh. So mostly, the neighborhood people, they would maybe gather at like the cleaner or the stores?

MY: Yeah, stores. But all depend what store, too, you know. Certain stores, we cannot. They strict. Like camp, that's why, good. Like the camp, they had their own gathering, lot of time. But beside that, shee, I don't know about. . . . Like boys, not so bad because, see, when the tourist come inside, we go down. The boys, some of them, they know how to make coconut hat. They make coconut hat and they stay Kalākaua Avenue, sell 'em to the tourists. Coconut hat, eh? Twenty-five cents, one hat. They steal all the center part of the tree from Kalākaua Avenue. Those days, the trees are short, see, Kalākaua Avenue. Not tall. The highest---of course, the tip of the branches is high, but, you know, till the first leaf is only about eight feet, ten feet. So, no problem to go get. Easy, get coconut.

And then, sometime, more fun, you go down there. . . . See, between Unique Ice Cream [Parlor] and that Banzai Cleaners, they used to get river, see, underneath there. The river come out (to the sea). And the water used to be not deep, you know, ocean side. Only about this deep, you know. So we all sit down. When the tourist walk on the sidewalk, we tell 'em throw the money inside because we go dive for the money. They no throw quarter or dime. They throw mostly pennies. The penny go like that, eh? So, we used to tell

them, "Throw a dime. Throw a nickel. Or penny will do." So they throw penny, eh? And we go dive. So, soon as we get 'em, put 'em in the mouth. We go show 'em, eh? Boy, that was a. . . . We had all kind of fun, you know.

And then, once in a while, we go make. . . . Boys, eh, we go make [rafts]. By Kapi'olani Park side, there was another river coming out. They had to gather all the marshes [MY means reed-like plants]. They had da kine straw-like marshes growing inside there, see. We gather that all up. We cut 'em up and we make just like a pontoon, see. We make a raft and we come down the river into the ocean. Get a kick, eh? And the other side, they get mud, they throw on top you.

MK: Some people said they used to go get 'o'opu and things like that over there.

MY: Yeah. Yeah, inside there. Yeah, 'o'opu. And they had da kine fish inside there. It's a cross with some kind of fish inside. To tell you more rascal [stories], you see, on the river there, you put stone. Put stone so you can run on top that. So, you go steal pigeon, see. You put peanut inside the--make a ring, eh, to let the pigeon come outside from the park, come on top there. Soon as you pull 'em, the pigeon get caught. Catch the pigeon and run across. The guy, the watchman cannot catch you because he got to run across the river, eh, on the stone, eh? Boy, I tell you, that was fun, boy.

MK: Where did the pigeon come from, though?

MY: In the Kapi'olani zoo. Full of pigeons in those days. But now, today, they no like the pigeons. Get so many pigeon, it's all over outside instead of inside the zoo. Our days, only few pigeon come outside. But today, full of pigeons.

MK: They're all over, yeah?

MY: Now, I don't go, but before I used to go down the beach every day and go swimming. The Haole lady, she get feed. She go down the beach. The birds follow her. The pigeon, the duck, the sparrow, all follow her to the beach. Then she go over there, then she maku all the feed to feed the birds. Some birds only come just to follow her. They tame already, you know, they no scared. Our days, you cannot. The bird not going come near because [the bird] going get roasted.

MK: (Laughs) And then, in the zoo those day, what were the highlights of the zoo?

MY: The highlight of the zoo was the lion. Lion and the elephant, the monkeys. You go tease 'em, the guy, oh, they get mad, you know. The lions and the ostrich. You go tease 'em, oh, boy, they get mad. The caretaker scold you.



MK: How about Daisy the elephant, was she still there?

MY: I don't know if this was the Daisy or not, but there was one elephant. But maybe the first one, I think, they killed because she wen injure somebody, you know, one time.

MK: That was Daisy.

MY: That was Daisy, eh? Yeah. Because I used to know the caretaker's sister. I wonder if she still living, I don't know. Yeah, Hawaiian girl.

MK: What was her name?

MY: I don't know. I know I used to know her face. And then, like the Matsuzawas, they had the push wagon. His position was end of the car line. Kalākaua Avenue, end of the car line is his spot. You know, those small wagon with the roof? He get soda water, gum, peanut. End of the car line. Then, the Handas was inside where the Daisy was, over there. Right on the banyan tree. They from Kapahulu. Every morning, the father and mother push the wagon all the way to Kapi'olani Park. And then, they had the peanut stand. You know, they can sell lot of peanut. Peanut and stuff like that. Yeah, two inside the zoo.

MK: Gee, I never heard about that.

MY: Yeah, they had Handa family from Kapahulu and they had the push [cart]. And Matsuzawa, end of the car line. They push. The father was getting old, so he used to help the father push the wagon. He had a good position. He used to work for Lewers & Cooke, price man for Lewers & Cooke. And Handa, Kapahulu, they had about one, two, three, four boys, I think.

MK: And then, Kapi'olani Park side, what was there, your time?

MY: Kapi'olani Park, our time, only thing good about there was going getting the dates. They had the big dates, see. You know, inside the zoo now, Kapi'olani Park, they had big dates. There was a guy named Nakamura, Yoshi Nakamura. He's the only one can climb the tree, inside. 'Cause he bring knife and he go right into the tree. Date tree, hard to climb. And then, another thing you can get, [at] Kapi'olani Park, for us was enjoyable was, they used to get the polo field, see. On the polo field on the Waikiki end, they had that Hawaiian cherry, you know. Full of that Hawaiian cherry. And they get big, you know. We used to go get. Cherry season, we all go down there, go get cherry. Cherry season, go get cherry down there.

MK: Did you folks watch the polo games, too?

MY: Yeah, we watch. Because we watch the polo games, and then we wait for the guys hit the ball away. So if he hit the ball away or if

the ball get broken off, they going throw 'em away, eh? So we wait. We all wait on the side, you know. Just like one rubbish picker. Soon as they throw away, oh, boy. Go home. And then, we come home, we go play polo on the road. 'Ōhua Avenue, we play polo on the road. No more polo ball, see. So, we get--you know, the Carnation cream can, the small can? Yeah, we use that. Ah! But abunai, you know. You get hit with that, you get hurt. But we didn't care. We make the polo stick. We see the polo stick and what kind wood they use, eh? There's one wood. You know, Japanese garden, they have that long, it's a wood with the leaf, just like fern kind, tall, eh? That's the one they make. We use that. And that hau tree, we make polo mallet. Play polo.

And then, once in a while, we have football with the Japanese against the Haoles.

MK: Oh, you mean, the gaijin of the neighborhood?

MY: Not, well, they . . .

MK: Haoles?

MY: Yeah, Haoles. But Haoles, demo, there's one Japanese guy. We call him Haole because he live with the Haoles in Diamond Head. Teraguchi, eh? And the rest all come from this side, all. And them guys, they all get shoulder pads, the headgear. Us, only sailor moku pants and sweater. Them guys, all, the headgear, everything. Us, no more. Go down Kapi'olani Park, challenge them. That was the fun we had with them. Once, we challenge them guys.

So, Halloween again, trouble for the. . . . Halloween, we go around. Nadamoto Store used to be produce, see. All the rotten tomatoes, throw 'em. Take 'em from there. Whack 'em on the Haole guys.

MK: (Laughs) How did you folks do in the football games with the Haole opponents?

MY: Well, naturally, we more rough, eh? But they had one good player, though. Olmos.

MK: Olmos? He's a Waikīkī guy, yeah?

MY: Yeah, yeah. He was a ace. You know, how fast, him. He was ace.

MK: Is he still around, Olmos?

MY: I guess so. But not living Waikīkī [now]. But they are a Waikīkī family. And the Purdy family used to be good.

MK: The Purdys lived your side, though?

MY: No, they stay on Paoakalani, next to the Parker.

MK: Oh, okay, that family. And then, since you were living in Waikīkī, you remember the Ala Wai Canal . . .

MY: Yeah, yeah, uh huh.

MK: What do you remember about that area?

MY: Well, that area, before, almost all, already, on that section, up already. There's only one family that live on the fairgrounds side. It's not on the Ala Wai. They used to get fairgrounds, see, those days. There was one family. Not into the fairgrounds, but outside of that. End of the Ala Wai Canal. There was one Hawaiian family in there. Chee, I forget his name, now. You cross the bridge to go into the fairgrounds because you got to pay to go inside, see. So, what we did was, you know, rascal, so we dig underneath the fence. We dig underneath, just can crawl underneath. So, this Hawaiian family, one day, he throw all the sour poi underneath that. Oh, we all got 'em.

MK: (Laughs) Oh, he found out about that.

MY: Yeah, he found out we go through his yard, eh? Going in, go inside. He throw sour poi underneath there. Catch us all, one day.

And then, that section, on all Ala Wai side, already, no more Oriental family. No Oriental. All no more. Was all few houses. Mostly all empty lots, you know, our days. Mostly empty lots, all with 'opiuma trees. Few houses around there. Only there was one on Lili'uokalani Avenue, I think, one two-story house. But that, they break down already. Was one big house over there. But rest of the place, Ala Wai, was all not too much houses.

MK: And then, you know, on Kalākaua Avenue, you had all the stores. And then, after the stores, as you go in the 'Ewa direction, what was there, when you were small time?

MY: Oh, Kalākaua Avenue, when you go . . .

MK: When you go back Okasako Store, and you keep on going . . .

MY: Yeah, and you keep on going. Then, right next to the church, St. Augustine's Church was all ready, see. There's an entrance there. Then next to that, had the Kilpatrick Apartment. And this Japanese family used to take care the yard over there. Okamura, Okimoto, Okamoto--Okamoto family, I think. Haruo. The family used to take care that. Then, you go past that, it's another apartment like. And then, you pass that again, had some taxi stand, maybe. As you go down, mostly all buildings. Not da kine stores. No stores there. Only thing, across, had the Waikīkī Tavern. That's the only store, across. Had Waikīkī Tavern. And you had the Steiner [residence]. Of course, Steiner left and the bowling alley came up. Then, after that, you get empty lot. Then you had the Moana

Hotel. Then after that, Outrigger Canoe Club. After that, the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, that time, was Brown family. They own all over there. Then, other side was, see, all old. . . . Waikiki Theater came up later on. Waikiki Theater came up. And then, they had one big Moana Hotel Court, you know. Big court, you know, Moana Hotel. Not the hotel, you know, but a big two-story or three-story cottage inside there, all. Still Moana Hotel. And next to that, you have the lane that going into the Moana Hotel, they had all the working people live inside the lane.

MK: Oh, where Mr. [Sadao] Hikida's family [lived] . . .

MY: Yeah, the lane going inside there. Next to that was the Moana Hotel, that pumping. Electricity, pumping [station]. An engineer, Fukuda, used to take care the engineering in that. And next to that, it was the ['Āpuakehau] river. The river come out right from Outrigger [Canoe Club], go into the ocean. And then, you pass that. Little more pass, where this International Market [Place] is. You pass that, pass market, used to get one tennis court there.

MK: Tennis court?

MY: Yeah. Tennis court and cottages there. Nice, da kine small cottages, rental cottages, was there. After that, I don't know, because we no go outside to the other side too much.

MK: Gee, Waikiki was really different then.

MY: Oh, today, it's altogether different. I should have kept all the pictures. I had lot of nice [photographs]. . . . Chee, I used to be liking photography. I used to take nothing but sunset pictures in Waikiki. Oh, I had many collections of sunset in Waikiki. I used to collect. Because Waikiki, sometimes, get nice sunset. I used to take. I used to take, sometimes, underneath the palm tree. You know, the coconut trees was short, see. Only this. Branch hanging down. I lay down and I take between the leaf hanging, I take sunset, eh?

MK: Oh (chuckles), fancy kind.

MY: I come home, I develop my own. I used to get darkroom. I used to make my own. That's why, when my senior year, I used to be president of the McKinley High School Camera Club. That's why, I used to catch hell from the Japanese [-language] school. When I used to go Makiki Japanese[-language] School, I get scolding from the teacher because he said, "You every time, go dancing. Every time, high school, dancing, that's why you come school late." But I don't dance. But I go to the [McKinley High School] Camera Club. See, I got to take care all the prints. After school, they make prints. I got to put 'em away for them, so that I come [Japanese-language] school late. So, grumble, that guy. Grumble so that I used to get disgusted with the teacher sometimes.



MK: Oh, now that we've gotten into your schooling, where did you go to school?

MY: My elementary was Waikīkī. After Waikīkī School, I went to Washington Intermediate. From Washington to McKinley High School.

MK: And then, during your Waikīkī [Elementary] School years, what do you remember most about going to Waikīkī School?

MY: Oh, Waikīkī School, I remember most was get up early in the morning, eat breakfast, and walk to school with the boys. Lunch hour, we got to come home, eat. So, soon as the bell rings, go like hell. You know, run. Those days, only half an hour lunch, you know. Go, run home. Eat lunch and run back to school. But other nationalities---like us, was my family. We go run. So, like the Portuguese boys, you go look. They get da kine saloon pilot cracker with jam on top. And then, some, there's a Chinese guy used to sell stew rice at the school. You know, underneath the kamani tree, he have a small stand. He sell stew rice. But if you catch the manapua man, then you can buy manapua. Our days, the parents don't give you any money. You go school with nothing. So, you got to go . . .

MK: Run home.

MY: When you pau eat lunch, run back to school. Like I don't know [what] the other [students did], that's what I used to do because our parents was strict for school. It was very strict for us. School was very important to them. So, after I graduate high school, my dad wanted to send me go USC [University of Southern California], see. But I wasn't interested. He wanted me to study motion picture, photography, because that was his hobby. My father's hobby was motion picture. So he had all the motion picture, big kind, when the Japan baseball team used to come Honolulu. Meiji [University], Waseda [University], come play stadium, they used to take pictures of that. That's why I came interested in baseball, because I used to go every baseball game that they used to get at the stadium. I used to go with my father. Used to go. But other kids they no can go because you got to pay to go in. But my father them used to take pictures, so I used to go watch. So, he wanted me to go USC, go learn photography. But I said I don't want already.

So he told me, "Then I give you trip to Japan." So, after I graduate, I went Japan. When I went to Japan, Yokohama, I met my Makiki Japanese[-language] School principal. Mr. Mashimo was inside the hotel. Hotel, ryōkan, they call it. Not this kind big hotel. Ryōkan. He was right inside the lobby, sitting down. When he saw me, first thing he call me, "Yoshimura-san, come." I went to see him. He said, "You good boy, no? Benkyō shite (You're a good boy, aren't you? Study)."

"No. Asobi ni kita (No. I came to play)."

Ah, lose his fight. Because that time when I went Japan, had four of my classmates from my class were going Japan. Was going to school there. They was all in da kine top class in Japan, school. Hosoi, Kansai, and anyway but they never come back. They wen get drafted in Japan army. So when 1935 when I went there, when I went to the country, Yamaguchi-ken, I stay there one week, my uncle told me, "You better get out from here." [He knew] because he work for the government. Railroad station, he work for the government. So railroad station, they get news, eh? They get news, you stay down there, you going get drafted because we were dual citizen then. We were dual citizen, Japanese and [American]. Dual citizen yet. So he told me, "No stay longer than one week already. You've seen your grandfather already, so go."

So me and my grandfather, we had a good time fishing every day. My grandfather had land right around the ocean. Oh, beautiful land right on the ocean, white sand. Beautiful. We go fishing every night. Night, we go catch 'opae, nighttime. Daytime, we go fishing. We catch all the fish, we put 'em inside one big da kine fish trap. Then, this guy from Yanai, the peddler, he come buy the fish. I tell my grandfather, "The peddler crooking you." Japan, when they come, they no more scale. They get da kine weight. The thing here is long, so they balance it with a [weight]. . . . "I think the thing no good," I tell him [MY's grandfather].

(Laughter)

MY: So, when I went to Japan, every day I go, the bicycle, I go. Yanai is the nearest town. It takes you about, oh, about forty-five minutes to ride to Yanai. I go in town, I buy break[fast]--you know da kine pan, eh? Buy pan, I buy wine for my grandfather, buy food, come home. My grandfather say he don't drink da kine wine. He like the da kine cheap, sweet wine. I buy da kine sour [i.e., dry], expensive wine. He say, "No, da kine no good." So we had one lady from Hawai'i there. Hawai'i no lady, eh? So he gave 'em all to her. Oh, she drink up. They all like come my house nighttime. When I was there, they all like come my house. Because I bring all the goodies for my grandfather. Oh, my grandfather, give him all kind. Bring cracker, coffee, chocolate, anything, for him. So, every night, all these people like--he said, mago, they like come see me. Not me, they like come eat. 'Cause he got to make coffee and all, eh?

MK: So how long did you stay Japan, then?

MY: Oh, only three weeks. Two weeks. One week in . . .

MK: In Yamaguchi?

MY: No. One week--no not one week, over one week, traveling first, you know. And three days in Tokyo; I came home.

MK: So, were you worried, too, about what was going to happen?

MY: Oh, yeah. Because down there already, when I was in Japan already, my friend was telling me, "You cannot talk stink about the tenno heika." He said, "The tenno heika, you gotta stay [bow] down, [that's] the law." So, we talking English. The cab driver no can understand English. So we talking stink, any kind. "Oh, no worry about that guy." If the driver know, boy, he take us to the [police]. . . .

MK: And so, let's see, you went McKinley, yeah?

MY: Yeah.

MK: What year did you graduate?

MY: [Nineteen] thirty-five.

MK: Nineteen thirty-five. You were like senior year camera club president.

MY: Senior year, I played tennis for the McKinley High School. Tennis team, eh? Yeah, I played tennis team.

MK: Going back to the Waikiki School days, I was wondering, what did you think about the teachers at Waikiki?

MY: Oh, those days, the teachers are very strict. Very strict. Oh, they're strict. Especially, we had some teachers. But, you see, like our days, Waikiki School, they were famous for their garden. Before, schools, they had a contest. Governor [Wallace Rider] Farrington had da kine. Every school, they have a contest, all the schools, of who get the best school garden. So, we had Mrs. [Mabel] King. You heard of her, eh? Mrs. King was our principal. Used to live by Royal Hawaiian Hotel by the ocean. Mabel King. Oh, boy, she love her garden. So, every week. Every day, school, one class got to go out. You know, morning time, got to go out, clean rubbish and pull weeds. And then, there's one bunch that go get, come--you see this church right here [on Kaunaoa Street]? Used to be one cow barn. The church, yeah, used to be one barn, you know, big barn, from this end to the other side. Cow--they used to own cow. So, this teacher, Texeira, used to bring the boys. Push the cart and come over here, and they used to go get cow manure. Bring that all the way back to Waikiki School again, put 'em on the plant. So, they plant the new plant.

And then, Mrs. King, she get big ruler. You do something no good, bang, she whack you. I used to be the rascal one. You know, the kamani leaf, you know how big, eh? Kamani leaf, eh? When I see dog shit, I cover the kamani leaf on top there. The guy come pick 'em up, he got to pick 'em up, eh? He don't know. But when he pick 'em, he mad like hell. "Who wen do that?"

MK: (Laughs) Who were the teachers back then?



MY: Oh, we had Mrs. Lam.

MK: I heard of a Mrs. Lam who was a teacher, yeah.

MY: She was my teacher, I know. Then, who else? Mrs. Lam. . . . Oh, Texeira. Shee, I forgot now, no? Such a long time ago, no? Oh, [Emma] Kaawakauo. She was a teacher, too, I remember. She was Waikiki School teacher, Hawaiian. Yeah, Kaawakauo.

MK: Then, when you were a student, when you going intermediate school or high school, did you have any part-time jobs?

MY: Well, they told us if we like part-time jobs, but we didn't like. Because we had plenty part-time jobs. I did little while. See, what the part-time jobs--see, McKinley High School, O'Neil used to be the boys' counselor like. Waikiki get plenty part-time yard man. Yard job, get. You know, you shoot water, clean the yard, after school. I did little while of that. But you cannot, Waikiki hard because, shee, the surf, the water is so good every time. So, you got to go surfing all the time. You know what I mean? That's why, we had hard job to take that job. And the parent, if you like go surfing, he cannot stop you. So, summertime, I can go surfing only two times. My mother let me go surfing only two--once in the morning, once in afternoon. So, if I go in the morning, I go surfing, and I got to come out, quick, take shower, and dry off, come home. I told my mother, "I never go in the water yet, so I still get afternoon two time more." So, afternoon, when we go, I go one in the afternoon. Then late in the evening, we go again. Late in evening. Dark already, we still surfing. So you can see my father on the stone wall, standing up, calling us, come home, eat, already. You can see him calling, you know. We go surfing nighttime and all.

MK: Was really good then, living Waikiki.

MY: Oh, yeah. Oh, Waikiki was a good place, no doubt. No more trouble, boy, that's a good place, Waikiki was. You don't starve, Waikiki. You get lot of coconut, you get lot of mangoes, every fruits, eh? You no starve, Waikiki. That's a good place. You ask everybody, they tell you. You tell [Mervin] Richards, he tell you, "Waikiki good." Today, not like before. Yeah, our days, was good. That's why, Mervin, he knows. I used to coach baseball, too. I coached Little League for seven years.

MK: Waikiki School Little League?

MY: No, this regular. Little League regular. The one that all the Little League, get all the one--you know, Honolulu get all the Little League, eh? I was coaching the one in Kapahulu called, "Cardinals." We get practice in Kapi'olani Park. After that I coached a American Legion team league, couple years. That's how I know Richards good because his boy used to play for me.



MK: Oh, so you've been in baseball long time, then?

MY: Yeah.

MK: I can see by the bats and everything.

MY: No, that's my boy. My boy take over. He play golf, tennis, basketball, baseball. He just moved out. He was living here. He just moved out. He's living by Halawa, you know, the two-tone house get. Yeah, he living there now. He's going get married in August. So, I'm just getting ready for him for all the plants, centerpiece. He like one centerpiece, one orchid plant. So, I got to make about thirty, thirty-five bloom by August. Well, I help all my, rest of all my relatives. All of them, I gave 'em orchid plant for the centerpiece. Every one that got married.

MK: That's a nice thing to do.

(Interview interrupted, then resumes.)

MY: So, when we had this Takashige boy, he was Waikīkī, his grandson got married, see, last year sometime. And I was invited. This guy from Manoa was talking about Waikīkī people. All the Waikīkī people get together, old people and all. And this guy, he said---Monkawa was there, too. All the Waikīkī bunch. And Mr. [Toshio] Yasumatsu was there. This guy was telling bad about me. "This 'Mahjong' is no good beach boy. He's no good boy."

Yasumatsu man tell, "You wrong. Kono hito ga ichiban Waikīkī. Waikīkī de ichiban ii koto shite oru," he said. "This boy is number one, Waikīkī."

He [the guy from Manoa] said, "Why?"

"He do only good thing for Waikīkī people."

He tell, "How come?"

That's the truth, that's why. I did so much for the Waikīkī people. I do a lot of thing for them.

That's why, he [Yasumatsu] tell, "See, this man is good boy. You no talk bad about him."

(Laughs) The guy, he look sick. That's why, even today, all the Japanese old ladies, they like me. They know me because always I go to their funerals and everything, I go.

MK: Going back to like after you graduated from high school, you started working?

MY: Yeah, I started working. The first job I did was Ibaraki Store, I was helping as a clerk inside there. Just start from

about five o'clock in the morning and [end at] seven o'clock [at night]. So, I used to get bad time because the butcher, they go out. Had one butcher boy. He goes out and take order, see. When he goes out, he don't come back till about maybe nine o'clock, ten o'clock. So meantime, who going sell the meat? So, I got to sell the meat. I know how much a pound cost. So I cut the meat. I seen how he cut the meat. So I cut the meat, you know. But he grumble because I no cut the meat so straight. The boss tell me, "That's all right. So you sell is the main thing."

Then, crack seed, you know, those days, plenty people eat crack seed. We buy crack seed and it come in the five-gallon can, square kind can. The thing is sour. So I asked the boss, "Ibaraki-san, can I make the crack seed more 'ono?"

He said, "Up to you. You do what you like. You running the store. You do."

So, I bought one big bowl of syrup, and I throw 'em inside the crack seed. I mazeru, eh? I pour 'em on. Oh, the thing go out [like] hot cakes.

That's why, after that, I quit the store. Then my dad wen buy some stock inside Home Run Bakery. Kapi'olani [Boulevard] had one bakery called Home Run Bakery between Pensacola [Street] and Kapi'olani [Boulevard]. That place had one piano, big piano store, eh?

MK: Yeah, yeah.

MY: Next to that had one long building inside that, from this end to the other end of the [block]. . . . Home Run Bakery. So my dad bought stock over there. So, naturally, he asked all the. . . . All the stockholders was Ibarakis, and the Hironakas, and . . .

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 13-75-1-86; SIDE ONE

MK: So you were saying, how did you get involved with Home Run Bakery?

MY: My dad had share, bought stock inside the company. So, they asked me if I like work because I already quit the Ibaraki Store. Because I cannot work from five o'clock [in the morning] to seven o'clock [at night], you know. Too hard, eh? And I had to do all the show painting, you know, the sales sign, show card. I can paint, see. I used to be good. High school, I used to be in commercial art. And I used to go take Academy of Arts [classes]. My high school teacher used to send me Academy of Arts, go learn more art. So I used to paint all the sales signs for the store. So the man knew I can do it, so he told me, "Why don't you go try,

since your father gets [shares]. . . . "

Okay. So I went. So I told 'em okay. They gave me one truck and I go sell cracker. Since I'm the youngest boy inside there, they give me all da kine junk kind stores, where they no can sell kind. The only big store I had was Ichiki Store. The rest was all small, beer joint. Because they sell da kine cheese cracker for the beer joint. Yeah, cheese cracker, small kind. So, I start off with Waikiki side stores. All the big one, I no can go. Ibaraki, Aoki Store, I no can go. I got to go da kine small kind. And there was a store in Kapahulu, right out here, Lum's Store, Chinese store. Lum's Store. I go by there. I ask the owner, Mr. Lum, "Can I put some of my cracker?"

He said, "No can. Because I get Love's Bakery and I get Diamond Bakery. And that's too much."

I think to myself, "I get you. I sell my cracker."

So, I get lot of friends in Kapahulu, see. I go all to them [and say,] "When you guys go to the store, you tell the lady you like Home Run cracker." You know, Japanese people, they go Chinese store, buy, see. Chinese people, they no go Japanese store, buy. But Japanese people, they go to Chinese store, buy. So, they go in. "Mr. Lum, we like Home Run cracker. We like try because I heard that very good," they tell him.

"Nah, nah, nah, nah."

"Okay. We no buy cracker, then. We no like cracker. We like buy Home Run cracker." They all go inside.

So, this guy--Davies and Company--there was one Chinese guy that sells Ibaraki, all the stores that, wholesale, he sells. Davies Dry Goods, he sell. He asked me one day, "'Mahjong,' how did you get into that Chinese store? Chee, boy, I see your cracker inside there already."

I say, "Yeah. Technique."

He tell me, "Why?"

"I use my technique. I got 'em in."

He said, "But how did you do it?"

"I tell my customers, they like Home Run cracker. That's why, they get."

So, he told me, "Boy, you smart. You smart how to get on."

I said, "Well, that's the only way. That's the only way."

So, after Home Run Bakery pau, then I work for Honolulu Planing Mill. I work over there long time until I got drafted into the army. Then I could have got deferred, you know, because Kubota and Mitsuka [co-workers] all got deferred because they doing government work inside planing mill. But I figured, ah, shucks, might as well go. So I got drafted, I went inside.

When I came back, Lewers & Cooke, Mr. Turner was our colonel. And Jimmy Lovell was bigshot. Major Lovell, eh? And they all Lewers & Cooke men. So they asked me, why don't I work for them. I said, "Okay, I work." But as I work, two, three years, business getting little slow. So they laid off lot of my friends that work way before me. They work fifteen years, Lewers & Cooke. Me, only two years. And I see my friend. So I went to the personnel, the guy's name was Duker, I think. Personnel. I told him I want to quit. I no tell Turner them. I say, "I want to quit because I'm new here. These people, they work fifteen years, I don't want to take their job."

"It's up to you."

I say, "That's good. I going." So I gave them notice. So, soon as I paid, then they had this lumber company called, "Mid-Pacific Lumber." So, [the president of the company] and I good friends, see. He and I good friends, see, from before. So I asked him. [He's a] UH [University of Hawai'i] graduate, see. I ask him, "Hey, you need workman?"

Oh, before that, he asked me. "Anytime you like job, you come see me."

So I say, "Okay." So I wen apply. I told him, "I like work."

He say, "You sure? Okay, I give you one. I pay you an advance so you no quit." So, he paid me one month advance. And I work for there. Till I retired, I worked for him, you know.

MK: When did you retire?

MY: Six years ago. I worked for him twenty-two or twenty-four years with him. But till today, I still sell for them, you know. The customer call me at home, I call in the order for them or I go down to the job. So, I give them. He knows. When he see the listing, he knows that I still work for them. He say, "Because, you, you do real good pub. . . ."

MK: Public relations?

MY: Yeah. I do good public relations for them. The contractor like that. They buy from us, I bring orchid for them, the secretary, eh? Like Secretary Week, I used to bring [flowers], before. Secretary, I bring flower for them. The boss know all those things. You think he don't know? He knows, you know. The guys



don't know.

So, when we work there, two or three boys, they wen quit. They wen go Lewers & Cooke, see. They ask me, "Why you no go? You get the first preference."

So when I told the president that I cannot take that job, boy, he shake my hand, boy. He said, "You real good man. You loyal to one boss. That's what I like. That's a good man." He no tell me no good. He tell me, "You good. That's very, very good. You are very loyal to your boss. That's what's good."

MK: Oh, he remembered, then, yeah?

MY: Yeah. So, he's nice.

MK: Gee, so you worked there till 1980, then? Six years ago.

MY: Yeah. And then, I couldn't get retired. 'Cause the boss don't want to let me go. He tell me, "No. You come one week, only two weeks, all right, you work for me. You come half day all right." All conditions, he gave me.

But my wife tell me, "Like you, you go inside one time, once you get inside, you no can come home already because you get your customers, you going to take care." You know, any business salesman, when you get your customer, you got to take care. And me, that's one guy, I no like the guy feel bad. I got to take care [the customer] until he's satisfied. I said, "The only thing I can do, I take the order from my house. My home office, and I do for you. Is that all right?"

He [MY's boss] said, "Well, no can help, eh?"

I say, "You no have to pay me."

MK: Uh huh, so then you retired?

MY: That's how I got retired. But still, I help them. I put in order. I get my book. My book over here, someplace. I put in order.

MK: How long has it been since you've moved out of Waikīkī?

MY: Oh, thirty years, no, I think?

MK: So, how long have you been over here? This house?

MY: Twenty-something years, I think. See, this house, I built my own, you know.

MK: I guess if you work at the lumber company, better, yeah, if you build your own?

MY: Yeah, because I had a friend. He's an architect. He and I were in army together. He's a very good friend of mine's. He died already. I told him to help to design my own. I said, "Make room in the front yard and make room in the backyard." That's why, the house is like that, like that. So you get room in the front yard, and you get room in the back yard. But that way, you get more ventilation. All rooms with no more partition. So, house is cool.

MK: I have just a couple more questions for you. You know, now that when you look back on Waikīkī, what are your feelings about having lived in Waikīkī?

MY: Well, I no regret. It was a nice country. You can realize all the memories of Waikīkī. You can talk to friend and you can still talk about the good time we had. You know, the friendship we had, the people we know. All nice people, we met. Good people. The Hawaiians were real nice people, we had. Good, friendly. Just like all brothers. We all live together like. No more argument, no more fight, nothing. Like the other kind district, you get lot of fight, eh? Gang fight. We don't have that. We had good relations.

MK: And then, when you look at how Waikīkī is now, what do you think about the changes that have happened in Waikīkī?

MY: Oh, yeah. Well, the change is too much, no? Not like the old Waikīkī where you can go down the beach and enjoy. Get parking space. Today, you cannot find no parking space. Even if parking meter have, you cannot go down there, find parking meter because everybody goes down the beach. Even if they allow you to, parking meters, you cannot find parking meters.

MK: For today, then, I'll end the interview here, yeah?

MY: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW

# **WAIKĪKĪ, 1900 - 1985: ORAL HISTORIES**

## **Volume I**

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